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‘We Want Everybody’s Salvage!’: Recycling, Voluntarism, and the People’s War

Henry Irving (ORCID 0000-0002-7264-2753)

Cultural Studies and Humanities, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK

henry.irving@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

0113 81 27730

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‘We Want Everybody’s Salvage!’: Recycling, Voluntarism, and the People’s War

This article reveals the role of volunteers in the British government’s campaign to increase recycling during the Second World War. It argues that the overlooked experience of these volunteers can be used to deconstruct the idea of a people’s war. Drawing on a range of underused archival sources, the article suggests that this concept remains an important frame of reference, albeit one that was invoked in various ways. It demonstrates that voluntary recycling schemes were led from the bottom-up, shifted the balance of power between private citizens and local authorities, and highlighted difference based on age, socio-economic status, gender, and geographical location. The article concludes that official appeals may have invoked the ‘people’s war’, but the way they were received was of most importance.

Keywords: Second World War; recycling; salvage; voluntarism; gender; memory

Introduction

In January 1943, after months of delay, the British Ministry of Supply secured a production licence that allowed it to produce a series of plastic lapel badges. The badges were decorated with a letter ‘S’ surmounted by a crown and symbolised membership of the salvage stewards scheme. The badges were part of a nationwide campaign to increase recycling – ‘salvage’ – for the production of armaments. There were red badges for those appointed by local authorities, blue badges for those appointed in shops and offices, and green badges for those appointed in factories. A separate badge depicting a cog wheel within a circular frame was available for junior salvage stewards, who were younger volunteers overseen by the Women’s Voluntary Services (WVS). The recipients of the badges were primarily responsible for managing dumps of recyclable material, but were also asked to promote recycling among their neighbours, co-workers, and peers. The salvage stewards scheme had been promoted from July 1941 and represented the high-point of public participation in wartime recycling. At least

350,000 civilians – the majority of whom were women or children – received one of the four badges.¹

This article uses the salvage stewards to deconstruct the idea of the ‘people’s war’. This concept refers to a belief that the British people pulled together to secure military victory from the jaws of defeat.² The extent of active participation in the war has been a focus of debate ever since Angus Calder published *The People’s War* in 1969. His study suggested that there was broad support for the war, but argued that this was hollowed-out by a continuation of pre-war social divisions. Subsequent generations of historians have tested the boundaries of his thesis by considering the war’s impact on social change, community spirit, and national identity. More recent scholarship has moved away from binary arguments over myths and realities. Instead, the ‘people’s war’ has been increasingly understood as a form of cultural memory that was forged during the war itself. This interpretation has been supported by a renewed interest in the nuances of wartime propaganda. Mark Connelly, for instance, has argued that the war was “mythologised as it happened” by a public that interpreted official messages according to their own frames of reference.³ This echoes Sonya Rose’s broader argument that British civilians ‘understood themselves as being members of the nation, even if they could not agree on how the nation was constructed’.⁴

Wartime recycling has not featured in these debates, being mentioned only briefly by Calder and not at all by Connelly or Rose. In the social history of the war, the inherently mundane act of separating waste has been virtually forgotten. Yet, recent studies in environmental history suggest that there is a need to re-appraise its significance. Timothy Cooper has suggested that a rapid growth of recycling rates at the beginning of the war can only be explained by wartime notions of active citizenship, while Peter Thorsheim has argued that recycling “exemplified total war more than any

other wartime activity”.⁵ It was an activity that involved the vast majority of the civilian population and involved a complex relationship between the state and a sometimes sceptical public.⁶ The present article builds upon this work by drawing attention to the little-known role that volunteers played in wartime recycling schemes. Following Thorsheim’s lead, this is linked to wider debates about the British home front. I argue that the history of the salvage stewards scheme demonstrates the enduring significance of the ‘people’s war’ as a frame of reference, but suggest that it did not blunt understandings of difference based on age, class, gender, and geographical location.

The article is split into three parts. The first analyses early understandings of the ‘people’s war’ by considering why recycling was deemed necessary and how it was promoted. The second explores how the salvage steward scheme came to be adopted in order to illustrate the dynamic relationships between those involved. The third examines the experience of stewards and the extent to which they viewed their involvement as a contribution to the war effort. The examples are drawn from various sources. The administrative history of the scheme has been pieced together from the remains of the Ministry of Supply’s papers at the National Archives, records deposited in local authority archives, and material housed by the Royal Voluntary Service Archive and Heritage Collection. These sources have been supplemented by published accounts from newspapers and trade journals. An understanding of the experience of stewards has been gleaned from wartime opinion surveys, post-war memories collected by Norman Longmate in the late 1960s and early 1970s⁷, Peter Liddle in the 1990s⁸, and the BBC People’s War archive in the early 2000s⁹, and a handful of more recent interviews undertaken by the author. In combination, these sources provide greater understanding of the everyday actions upon which wartime recycling depended and help to reveal this strangely overlooked part of life on the home front.

Recycling and total war

The idea of the ‘people’s war’ is rooted in the unparalleled involvement of British civilians in the Second World War. In Calder’s words, the conflict demanded a level of participation that was “wider, deeper and longer” than any in living memory.¹⁰ The British state expected the conflict to be a total war, with civilians potential targets of aerial attack, and economic mobilisation as important as military tactics. The rhetoric of a ‘people’s war’ was invoked as a way of explaining this reality. In early 1940, for instance, the government’s Ministry of Information suggested that its main objective was to convince the public that their efforts were required for victory. The war, it said, was one “of wills as well as guns”.¹¹ This interpretation was famously summed-up by Winston Churchill in August 1940. Speaking in the House of Commons, he described the conflict as one where “The whole of the warring nations are engaged, not only soldiers, but the entire population, men, women and children ... [they] are soldiers with different weapons but the same courage”.¹²

The motivation for wartime recycling was rooted in the material conditions of total war. In 1939, most British manufacturers imported at least some of the raw materials they consumed. The Second World War interrupted this trade, increased the risks facing the merchant navy, and made some materials impossible to obtain at any price. Consider the case of paper, which had a wide range of civilian and military uses (from food packaging to shell casings). British paper mills had traditionally depended on wood pulp imported from Scandinavia and North America, with approximately 300 shiploads imported in 1938-39. The Ministry of Supply was responsible for ensuring that shortages did not disrupt the production of armaments. It administered a range of controls over the production and consumption of paper, and promoted recycling as a

new source of supply. A similar approach was taken to other commodities, including metals and rubber.¹³

Official efforts to boost recycling focused on two areas. The first was the means of collection, which fell to the 1,800 local authorities with a statutory responsibility for waste collection. Despite investment in mechanical sorting plants in larger urban areas, most councils disposed of refuse through tipping and incineration. In November 1939, just 324 reported any form of recycling.¹⁴ Even where facilities existed, their use was often limited. In the case of paper, which always had a market, it was estimated that less than two per cent of the waste stream was recycled by local authorities before the war.¹⁵ From November 1939, councils were encouraged to attach ‘salvage trailers’ to refuse vehicles or introduce alternative rounds for recycling and refuse.¹⁶ In June 1940, the Ministry of Supply issued a compulsory direction, making the efficient collection of recyclable waste a legal requirement for all local authorities with populations of 10,000 or above (this was amended to cover areas of 5-10,000 inhabitants in March 1941).¹⁷ The second area of focus was public participation, which was far less easy to legislate for and depended on a significant change in behaviour. Indeed, the vast majority of British households had not had separate recycling collections before the war and many had been encouraged to burn their waste to keep down rates. Those responsible believed that publicity was the only way of making the public “salvage-minded”.¹⁸

After a fitful start, regular appeals began in February 1940, with households encouraged to adopt new routines for sorting their waste.¹⁹ These appeals reflected official understandings of the ‘people’s war’. In July 1940, for instance, the Ministry of Supply and Ministry of Information co-operated a nation-wide campaign to promote the compulsory direction issued to local authorities. The campaign was centred on a four-page leaflet with the dual title ‘Waste collection is now compulsory’ / ‘Here’s what you

do to help'. The leaflet sought to illustrate the connection between recycling and the realities of total war. It drew attention to the uses that could be made of recycled materials: making direct links between cardboard cartons and rifle cases; rags and uniforms; tins and tanks. It also stressed that Britain could "no longer afford to bring from overseas one single ounce of anything that can be produced – or *saved* – at home". In line with the government's overall approach to home front propaganda, the onus was placed firmly on the individual. The leaflet stressed that "Your Council will arrange for the collection of all this valuable waste material. But it depends on *YOU* – on how carefully *YOU* save it and keep it for collection".²⁰

A high-profile publicity campaign was used to promote this message. It revolved around the strapline "Up housewives and at 'em" and is notable for its gendering of recycling as an opportunity for women to participate in the war. Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird have suggested that the Second World War was "one of the most contradictory periods in British history for the boundaries between male and female roles".²¹ The "Up housewives" campaign shows how this contradiction could be deliberately invoked. The campaign was launched by the Minister of Supply, Herbert Morrison, in a broadcast appeal on Sunday 28 July 1940. This used a succession of military metaphors to describe recycling as a form of war work. Morrison claimed:

Every piece of paper, every old bone, every piece of scrap metal is a potential bullet against Hitler. We would never fling a bullet. We must never fling away one piece of scrap that can be salvaged.

"This is a job for us all", he concluded, "but particularly, it's a job for the women. Up, housewives, and at 'em".²² The campaign that followed included a series of advertisements featuring three women in a range of militaristic poses. The lead poster showed them marching forwards, armed with a pile of newspapers, a bundle of bones,

and an old curtain pole. Later advertisements showed them hurling household waste at Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito, before being thanked by three uniformed servicemen.²³

While the “Up housewives” campaign encouraged women to regard themselves as ultimately responsible for the production of rifle cases, tanks, and uniforms, it did so in a way that emphasised a well-worn distinction between men bearing arms and women in supportive roles. According to Megan Lloyd George, who chaired a cross-party committee of female MPs that was established to advise Morrison on the issue, women were duty-bound to “collect every scrap of raw material ... for the defence of their sons”.²⁴ Similarly, while the military metaphors reflected the blurred boundary between combatants and non-combatants in a total war, the use of humour ensured that this did not challenge ideals of heroic masculinity; the campaign instead reinforced long-standing ways of thinking about gender by rooting women’s contributions to the home.²⁵ The fact that the Ministry of Supply specifically appointed a female journalist to write feature articles in the wake of Morrison’s appeal indicates that it struggled to regard recycling as anything but a female action in 1940.²⁶

Similar approaches were used to target children. In September 1941, after a successful trial in London, the WVS launched a national campaign for schoolchildren supported by the Ministry of Supply. WVS members gave talks about recycling in schools, children were encouraged to enter essay competitions on the topic, and popular songs were adapted to fit the theme (“There’ll always be an England” became “There’ll always be a dustbin” and the pigs in “Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf” overcame their adversary after being fed on food waste). Children were asked to become “Salvage Officers in their homes”, by “help[ing] their mothers get the paper, rags, rope, string and twine, metal, rubber and bones ready for the dustmen before collection day”.²⁷ Those who did so were encouraged to see themselves as “Cogs in the great wheel

working towards victory” and were told that their work would “be really helping the Navy, the Army and the Air Force to win battles”.²⁸ The *Daily Express* described them as recruits to Britain’s “youngest army”.²⁹ Membership of this army was denoted by a small badge that was given to any volunteer who helped for at least six weeks. The WVS stressed that this should not be seen as a reward, “but rather as a badge of authority worn only by children who are known to be reliable”.³⁰

A national appeal for adult volunteers in February 1942 built upon these techniques. As had been the case in 1940, it began with a radio broadcast that stressed the opportunity to make a direct contribution to the war effort.³¹ In an apparent nod to the Cog scheme, this message was reinforced by a degree of official recognition. Those who enrolled were given a signed certificate bearing the slogan “Waste into Weapons”, while newspaper advertisements stressed that the scheme was an opportunity to “take OFFICIAL part in salvage work”.³² The handbook produced for volunteers echoed this language by suggesting that recycling was a form of national service. Using a similar approach to the ‘Waste collection is now compulsory’ / ‘Here’s what you do to help’ leaflet, it explained that “we must utilise all of the waste material possible for the production of raw materials” because shipping was limited as a result of military losses in the Far East. This point was illustrated with a series of examples that expanded on those given eighteen months before.³³ In Birmingham, which produced its own version of the handbook, the instructions ended with the rousing call “This is everybody’s war! We want everybody’s salvage!”³⁴

“The people increasingly led itself”

The work undertaken by salvage stewards demonstrates the extent to which civilian life was disrupted by the war effort. Their main role was to manage communal dumps on behalf of their local authority, allowing refuse collectors to make a smaller number of

higher-volume collections. These dumps were usually established in private homes or gardens, making the collection of waste far more visible.³⁵ In Kingston upon Hull, for example, there was a symbolic movement of dustbins from the back to the front of houses.³⁶ The opening of salvage shops in empty commercial units made the process of recycling more visible still. These served as both collection points and sorting sites, with volunteers frequently sorting or baling recyclable waste in full view of passers-by. All of this required a significant commitment from the volunteers. In Liverpool, where detailed plans survive, stewards were asked to devote at least ten hours per week to their work.³⁷

However, it would be wrong to assume that the idea of a ‘people’s war’ was solely imposed from above, as the term can be usefully employed as a short-hand for active participation. For Calder, the Second World War was significant precisely because the British state realised that victory was dependent on its citizens. This, he claimed, meant that “the people increasingly led itself” because the government followed popular opinion in an effort to maintain morale.³⁸ The term, it seems, was flexible enough to incorporate different experiences, even if these ran counter or were tangential to the overall narrative.³⁹ Jessica Hammett’s research on civil defence workers provides an example of this in practice. She has shown how magazines and newsletters were used to develop a sense of community spirit among those involved in ARP. By reinterpreting official narratives, civil defence workers placed themselves at the centre of the war effort.⁴⁰ Rather than being imposed, examples like this suggest that the idea of the ‘people’s war’ was the result of a dynamic relationship between different interest groups.

The salvage stewards scheme was shaped in a similar way. Its origins can be traced to a decision concerning the distribution of the ‘Waste collection is now

compulsory' / 'Here's what you do to help' leaflet in July 1940. This posed a huge logistical challenge as ten million households were covered by the rules that the leaflet was designed to promote, but no two local authorities intended to implement exactly the same scheme. Megan Lloyd's George's advisory committee believed that the only option was to deliver the leaflet by hand, allowing local differences to be explained. Following this suggestion, the Ministry of Supply approached Britain's eight largest women's organisations for support.⁴¹ The organisations included the National Council for Women, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the Townswomen's Guild, the Women's Co-Operative Guild, the women's committees of the main political parties, and the WVS. The latter had the most important role. Initially set up to encourage women to participate in civil defence, by 1940 the WVS regarded itself as something akin to auxiliary service for the home front. Its founder, Lady Reading, regarded the WVS as a way of co-ordinating existing voluntary effort and the organisation grew quickly under her leadership: from 165,000 members in September 1939 to almost one million by the end of 1943.⁴² She had first come into contact with the Ministry of Supply in January 1940, when the WVS set up a salvage department to educate women about recycling.⁴³

In July 1940, the WVS was asked to co-ordinate a series of house-to-house visits under the banner of a "Victory Salvage Canvass". This effort was overseen by the WVS's Salvage Officer, Mrs Field, who was made an honorary advisor by the Ministry of Supply. After a successful experiment in London – where 1,167 volunteers delivered almost 425,000 leaflets – she announced the national scheme with a lunchtime radio broadcast. Field closely followed the language used in the "Up housewives" campaign, describing the canvassers as the "advance guard of an army of women [who would] visit 10 million housewives in their homes".⁴⁴ Her message was reiterated by an official

press release, which stressed that the canvass offered women an opportunity to “do their share in winning the war, even though they may have no rank other than that of housewife, no uniform but an apron, [and] no munitions factory but the dust-bin”.⁴⁵ A total of 8,907,750 leaflets were delivered in 889 local authority areas over the next two months, with WVS volunteers co-ordinating the effort in 495 cases.⁴⁶

In spite of these large numbers, the Victory Salvage Canvass had mixed results. The amount of material put out for salvage went up, but councils struggled to collect the increased supply. As the system creaked, officials recorded numerous complaints about overflowing bins and growing dumps. These problems resulted in the campaign being abandoned in the middle of its intended run.⁴⁷ This problems neatly demonstrates the dynamic relationships that existed between the different groups involved in wartime recycling. The Ministry of Supply may have initiated the appeal, but it relied on local authorities for collection, voluntary organisations to deliver its message, and the public to participate. Success depended on each of these elements working in combination, however the public held those who initiated the campaign accountable, forcing action when opinion turned against the scheme. If the message had been wrongly delivered, it is likely that local authorities would have coped, but the Ministry could still have been blamed for failing to take the campaign seriously.⁴⁸ The power of public opinion in this case suggests that the Victory Salvage Canvass should be viewed as an example of Calder’s model of the ‘people’s war’ in action. Significantly, the decision to suspend the campaign in October 1940 also resulted in some taking matters into their own hands.

This can be seen most clearly in Birmingham, which was Britain’s largest local authority area. The mixed success of the Victory Salvage Canvass put volunteers in the city at the forefront of its recycling effort. In July 1940, representatives from various women’s groups had agreed to co-ordinate their work under the umbrella of a new

Birmingham Women's Committee for Salvage.⁴⁹ It responded to the 'Up housewives' appeal by opening a network of 113 collection points in shops and homes to ease the pressure on council services.⁵⁰ Although the committee was stood down when the Victory Salvage Canvass was abandoned, just under half of these depots remained open over the winter. They became increasingly important as Birmingham's leaders struggled to maintain household collections in the face of an acute labour shortage and bomb damage to council facilities. By February 1941, there was an estimated backlog of 9,500 tons of refuse and recycling.⁵¹ In response, former members of the Women's Committee drew up plans for an expanded network of collection points. Birmingham's Salvage Department agreed to support their idea. It hoped that 3,000 collection points – referred to as 'street depots' – could be set up in private houses and gardens under the watch of individual volunteers.⁵² Each volunteer – or 'steward' – would be provided with three dustbins, sacks for storages, and posters to publicise the scheme.⁵³

The street depot scheme was a radical departure from the way that waste collection had previously been undertaken in Birmingham. Indeed, it is important not to underestimate just how great a change it was at a time when the collection and return of individual dustbins from private properties was the norm. It was for this reason that the Town Clerk issued an emergency public notice, which called on "the goodwill and co-operation of citizens" to make the new system work.⁵⁴ The boundary between service provider and service user was further blurred by the devolution of responsibility to the Woman's Committee, which was renamed the Birmingham Citizens' Salvage Committee in November 1941. The committee included John C. Jorden of the Birmingham Salvage Department, but was chaired by M.I. Allen of the Townswomen's Guild and relied on the WVS for most of its members. While the council produced a guide for stewards, distributed badges, and organised the collection of waste from

depots, most of the day-to-day management was left to these volunteers. At its height, 4,650 stewards were enrolled in the scheme.⁵⁵

The Ministry of Supply monitored these developments with interest. It first identified volunteers as a means of overcoming labour shortages in February 1941, recommending communal collection points in rural areas where waste collections by local authorities tended to be irregular.⁵⁶ After learning of Birmingham's plans, senior officials travelled to the city to address volunteers, and the city was encouraged to share its proposals with other local authorities in the Midlands. This led to the adoption of a similar scheme in the nearby town of Dudley. As in Birmingham, communal collection points were set up in residential streets and volunteers – referred to there as 'wardens' – were provided with sacks and posters. The scheme was rapidly expanded to 400 depots and was said to have resulted in both increased recycling rates and the re-introduction of regular weekly refuse collections.⁵⁷ Back in London, the Ministry formally appointed Field to work up plans for a nationwide expansion. Her appointment created an open channel of communication with the WVS and ultimately led to the instruction that all WVS centres should appoint 'salvage officers' to recruit stewards in their areas.⁵⁸

Information about the depot scheme was circulated to all local councils in July 1941. The Ministry then suggested that problems of labour and transport could "largely be surmounted by well-directed energy and co-operation", warning that a failure to act could discourage the public from separating their waste. In a bid to convince a greater number of local authorities to switch from individual to communal collections, each was asked whether they would adopt the scheme and to provide the reasons for their choice.⁵⁹ This downward pressure had an immediate impact in some areas. In Liverpool, for example, the Ministry's proposals were identified as a way of stemming the city's falling recycling rate, which had led to a vocal spat between the council and residents,

who accused refuse collectors of undoing their work by “throw[ing] the stuff into the bin cart indiscriminately”.⁶⁰ In August 1941, Liverpool appealed for 2,000 volunteers to assist in the collection of paper, making it the first city outside the Midlands to adopt the scheme.⁶¹ The appeal was timed to coincide with a special salvage drive in the first fortnight of October, which included an interactive exhibition where volunteers pinned their details to a map of the city in order to show the location of collection points.⁶² The drive was supported by an energetic campaign in the local press and resulted in the establishment of 500 depots in a month.⁶³

In other areas, the initiative for adoption came from below. This was the case in Leeds, where the city’s authorities initially rejected the need for street depots. Leeds had not faced as severe labour shortages as Birmingham and had a more efficient system of collection than Liverpool. Indeed, the city had benefitted from pre-war investment in reclamation and sorting facilities. In September 1941, it opened a new reclamation plant that was lauded as “one of the most complete and modern in the world”.⁶⁴ The city’s Cleansing Officer, Albert Mann, believed that this discounted the need for a street depot scheme. However, spurred by reports from the other side of the Pennines, the WVS in Leeds forced the council to change course.⁶⁵ On 24 October, less than three weeks after he had publicly dismissed the idea, Mann announced that a new system was to be implemented where ‘street organisers’ would be put in charge of the collection of paper and rags. The day-to-day organisation was to be undertaken by the WVS, with the Corporation providing the sacks necessary for storage.⁶⁶

As had been the case in Birmingham, the expansion of the salvage stewards scheme changed the relationship between local authorities and private citizens. The Ministry of Supply called on volunteers to take the initiative and asked local authorities co-opt representatives from voluntary groups onto their salvage committees or let them

form their own.⁶⁷ It also encouraged councils to foster a spirit of collaboration with their volunteers. Various local authorities ran tours of their recycling facilities to help stewards understand what happened to the materials they collected, some organised public talks, and others sent regular newsletters.⁶⁸ In some areas, the volunteers were even able to pick local causes to benefit from the proceeds raised from the sale of recycled material.⁶⁹ Such activities were supplemented by those organised by stewards themselves. Liverpool's stewards appear to have been particularly active, holding a variety show on 5 May 1945 to mark their contribution to the war.⁷⁰ There are also numerous examples of activities that were designed specifically for younger volunteers. For instance, the WVS in Andover, Hampshire held film screenings as special treats for its junior salvage stewards. The most popular show, held in February 1944, was attended by some 600 children from across the surrounding countryside.⁷¹

It was in rural areas that volunteers took greatest responsibility. Many villages had never had regular waste collections, so stewards often found themselves asked to carry out the entire process of collecting, sorting, and transporting recyclable material. For example, in Kingsbridge, south Devon, the district council encouraged volunteers to establish dumps in outlying villages and helped the WVS set up a central depot in the grounds of a local manor house. After securing an old laundry van and a second-hand baling press, the volunteers were able to take complete charge.⁷² Kingsbridge ended the war with one of the highest rural recycling rates in Britain, but its approach would have been familiar to stewards operating elsewhere. For instance, the WVS was also in charge in Thatcham, Berkshire, albeit without the luxury of a van. There, rags and bone collections took place on foot, with waste paper being picked up directly by workers from a local paper mill.⁷³

What contribution?

The evolution of the salvage stewards scheme shows how the idea of the ‘people’s war’ could be shaped by a variety of forces, but there remains the question of what it meant to those involved. There is evidence that some volunteers took aboard the message that their contribution would make a difference. In Leeds, for instance, one speaker at the public meeting held to inaugurate the scheme linked the collection of waste paper with efforts to supply the USSR with armaments. She urged the rest of the audience to compare their position with that of women on the Eastern Front. “All we are asked to do”, she said, “is to save paper. It is the least service we can perform”.⁷⁴ Such links seem to have been made most strongly by children. The BBC People’s War archive contains testimony from two former Cogs, who were both twelve when they enrolled as junior salvage stewards. One recalled signing up because the scheme offered a chance to “do something for the war effort” and the other did so as they were too young to join the Royal Observer Corps.⁷⁵ In a similar vein, a former WVS volunteer, writing in the 1970s, recalled an incident at a salvage shop in St John’s Wood, London. She described catching one of her young helpers taking home a piece of silver paper, before warning him that Britain might not be able to win the war as a result. His apology resulted in “all the children ... dancing around shouting ‘We’re going to win the war! We’re going to win the war!’”.⁷⁶

Public opinion surveys undertaken around the time of the government’s appeal for volunteers suggest that similar attitudes were held more widely. In February 1942, a quantitative study of 3,078 “housewives” by the government’s Wartime Social Survey found that 94 per cent collected at least one form of recycling and that 85 per cent thought – or hoped – that good use was made of the material.⁷⁷ One month later, the research group Mass Observation carried out an independent investigation on the

subject. Under the guidance of Derek Behrens (a trained physicist who attempted to make the group's methods more rigorous after he was appointed its chief statistical analyst in February 1942), it interviewed a smaller sample of 68 individuals over three days. When asked what they thought of a new government order that made the wrongful disposal of waste paper illegal, 60 of the respondents were in favour and only six were opposed. Significantly, only one was opposed because they refused to believe that recycled materials were needed for the war effort (the other five believed that the government had not handled the issue effectively).⁷⁸ Although these findings came from a very small sample, they suggested a marked change in attitudes towards waste when compared to the pre-war period. It is further evidence for the argument advanced by Cooper and Thorsheim.⁷⁹

The salvage stewards scheme was designed to exploit this support. At the time of the national appeal, around 1,000 local authorities indicated that they would take part, with some hopeful that the scheme would make an important contribution.⁸⁰ It was, however, recognised that a willingness to recycle would not inevitably translate into active participation from a society that was already highly mobilised. Levels of public support had long been a matter of concern for local authorities. For instance, in Stratford-upon-Avon, which had rejected a trial depot scheme in 1941, it was felt that “far too large a proportion of the population ... discourage the dustmen by not playing their part in keeping material separate”.⁸¹ The trade journal *Public Cleansing* also remained cautious as it believed that recycling was regarded as “a dull and monotonous sort of business” by many people.⁸² Some areas certainly struggled to recruit enough volunteers to make the scheme viable. In Brighton, for example, where 88 people had volunteered to knock on doors in 1940, only five volunteers responded to the initial appeal.⁸³ However, rather than an indication of apathy, such responses can be read as

evidence that the relationship between the local authority and households had already broken down. This was surely the case in Shoreditch, where attempts to recruit volunteers by holding a party with refuse collectors was abandoned because of “a strong feeling among the salvage men that the women are there to spy on them”.⁸⁴

Different local authorities responded to these challenges in different ways. In Liverpool, for example, the scheme adopted in October 1941 was relaunched in early 1943 in a bid to expand the number of depots beyond the 800 established by volunteers. The city’s leaders created a salaried post to liaise with women’s groups and aligned their revised scheme with plans for civil defence. New depots were established outside public air raid shelters and civil defence workers were strongly encouraged to enrol in the re-named Liverpool Salvage Corps.⁸⁵ Others decided that voluntarism would never be enough. In Kingston upon Hull, council leaders took the decision in 1942 to enforce a compulsory version. They divided the city into twenty-four divisions, subdivided these into smaller districts, and subdivided again into sectors of eight houses. Each of the eight households was then made responsible for a particular type of waste (with two responsible for ashes, one for food, one for glass, one for paper, one for rags, one for rubber, and one for tins). The council’s decision transformed individual dustbins into communal facilities shared with neighbours. Volunteer stewards were appointed to police the system, with those at the upper levels of the organisation receiving regular reports concerning many thousands of bins.⁸⁶

Differences within local authority could be as pronounced as those between them. This was the case in Hull, where the council struggled to expand its compulsory scheme in suburban areas because of the greater distance between bins. In Brighton, by contrast, the most serious problems were encountered in densely-populated blocks of flats.⁸⁷ Mass Observation’s findings suggest that such differences were perhaps proxies

for thorny issues of class and status. After investigating the expansion of the scheme in Kilburn, North London it identified the following response as typical:

A woman came round to see me the other day – I don't know who she was, she was dressed in a green uniform of sorts, and she asked me would I collect waste paper in this road, and she gave me a sack for it. I asked her where I should put it – I've got no room in here, and I can't be answering the door all day to people with bits of paper. So she said 'Hang it up by the gate, then'. That is ridiculous, with all that rain and wet, it would all be pulp before they came round for it. I asked her, why can't they leave it out by the dustbins, like the Government suggests? She said, 'Oh, yes, they could do that, but we're asking the housewives to help as well'. I thought it was nonsense frankly.

The situation was presented by Mass Observation as an attempt by middle class organisers to cajole working class volunteers, without offering any real understanding of what they hoped to achieve.⁸⁸ The grandchild of a WVS organiser in Hertfordshire recalled that class was similarly important in his rural area, describing his patrician grandmother taking a firm line on recycling with others in their village.⁸⁹

There was no comprehensive record of those enrolled in the salvage stewards scheme, but WVS records provide clues about the background of the 43,000 volunteers it enrolled. The figures show that the majority of WVS volunteers came from the Housewives' Service, which had been designed for women who did not have the time to volunteer at centres and was the main point of entry into the WVS for working class women.⁹⁰ By contrast, the recipients of higher-level positions – who were usually hand-picked by local authorities or WVS leaders – tended to be drawn from a much narrower group. This was most obvious in the Midlands, where the WVS's regional salvage officer was married to the deputy director of Birmingham's Salvage Department.⁹¹ In Leeds, where the scheme was entirely managed by the WVS, little effort was made to find volunteers in the traditionally working class south of the city. In December 1942,

the city's chief steward explained that this had been a deliberate decision, taken because she thought that there would be little material to collect in such areas.⁹²

It is notable that the Wartime Social Survey found no difference in attitudes towards recycling between different socio-economic groups. Its 1942 survey instead suggested that gender was the major determinant of participation. It found that women were three times more likely than men to take an interest in recycling (with 84 per cent of housewives and 27 per cent of husbands said to do so).⁹³ The salvage stewards scheme sought to overcome this by making an effort to reach beyond an exclusively female audience. In Liverpool, for example, the 1943 Salvage Corps was said to "offer equal service and opportunity irrespective of sex".⁹⁴ Nevertheless, while there is no membership list to judge the success of Liverpool's approach, anecdotal evidence suggests that most stewards (nicknamed 'Sallies' in some places) were women and children. This was the case in Hull, where the city's chief steward, a male councillor, attempted to garner interest in the scheme by holding a contest to select a 'Salvage Queen'. A former steward, who wrote detailed testimonials for Norman Longmate in 1967 and 1968, recalled that this was "quite a thrill for the women" as the winner got to ride in a loudspeaker car during the city's salvage drives.⁹⁵ In Stratford-upon-Avon, which kept a list of names and addresses, there was a more equal split between the 41 men and 39 women who took active part in the scheme, although the six leadership positions were all held by men.⁹⁶ Such examples suggest that the gendered nature of earlier appeals continued to exert an influence.

The individual experiences of stewards were compounded by the interplay between morale and shifting narratives of the 'people's war'. The appeal for volunteers was made at a high-point of popular interest in wartime recycling. This was recorded by the Wartime Social Survey, which carried out a wider study into attitudes towards

government instructions in early May 1942. It found that recycling was the most talked-about issue at that time, being mentioned by 31 per cent of respondents (compared to just 4 per cent for the better-remembered ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign).⁹⁷ As the war progressed, other issues took prominence, and the importance attached to recycling dwindled. This was the case for a former steward from Birmingham, who explained during an interview for this project that he gradually lost interest after 1942. He attributed this to a lack of publicity, recalling that there was “less general push to get salvage [from about 1943]”.⁹⁸ It is the case that a large number of Birmingham’s street depots had closed as the war entered its final stages; the city’s WVS Salvage Officer lamented that meetings had failed to attract new recruits “as only those already interested will come”.⁹⁹ She was not alone. In January 1944, an organiser in Hull had also complained about poor attendance at meetings and had noted that only one of the city’s 800 stewards had followed an instruction to tidy-up and re-paint the dustbins in their district.¹⁰⁰ Another interviewee, who had collected waste paper in Hull as child, suggested that this could have resulted from a greater scepticism about the use that was made of recycled material later in the war.¹⁰¹

While those responsible for implementation tended to blame the Ministry of Supply for failing to maintain publicity, more practical issues should not be overlooked. The work undertaken by stewards was dirty and demanding. A former junior salvage steward, who helped to process waste paper in Stafford, explained to Longmate that he had worked in a dump established in a condemned cottage with a leaking roof. His job was to carry loose paper upstairs to be sorted, before carrying it downstairs to be baled. Alongside the damp conditions, he remembered the rooms being so full with waste paper that it was necessary to crawl over stacks of paper to move between them.¹⁰² There were similar conditions in the tiny village of Kingston (near Kingsbridge), where

WVS organisers investigating a decline in collections were shocked to find that volunteers had been working in an open shed. Another problem was reported in Thatcham, where WVS volunteers diligently sorted through the materials discarded by a local paper mill to extract fragments of rubber and bone that had been placed in the wrong bins. This was described by the branch's chairman as "a most objectionable job" and was said to have caused the resignation of at least one volunteer.¹⁰³

Just as importantly, though, was a realisation that the salvage stewards scheme had not resolved all of the difficulties associated with recycling in wartime. Experience proved that success required both "An efficient salvage steward occasionally at the front door, and an efficient salvage collector at the back".¹⁰⁴ Yet, as representatives of the Ministry of Supply, volunteers often found themselves on the receiving end of grumbles about missed collections and overflowing bins. Weekly morale reports produced by the Ministry of Information suggest that complaints were likely to have been frequent, with serious criticism about recycling identified no fewer than 18 times in the six months after April 1942.¹⁰⁵ The council official responsible in Brighton insisted that such complaints were the main reason why his scheme had failed to attract more support.¹⁰⁶ By the end of the year, there were warnings from even the most enthusiastic areas that stewards had begun to "tire of constantly calling upon the same people and telling them ... what has been told to them so often".¹⁰⁷ If that was the case in 1942, it was, in the words of the regional organiser for the East of England, 'extremely uphill work' to do the same in 1945.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

The salvage stewards scheme was based on a belief that volunteers would willingly undertake hard, monotonous, and sometimes unpleasant tasks, if they believed they were making a contribution to the war effort. This approach was not without success.

Four months after its national appeal, the Ministry of Supply reported that there were “indications that [the scheme was] materially contributing to the effectiveness of salvage collections”.¹⁰⁹ Later that year, a report in *Public Cleansing* described it as “the most effective way of obtaining the greatest response from the public”.¹¹⁰ The scheme appeared particularly effective as it coincided with a marked increase in the quantity of recycling collected by local authorities. 1.5 million tons of mixed recycling were collected from households in 1942, which was 500,000 tons more than in 1941. The collection figures for waste paper – the most common material collected under the scheme – showed a proportionate rise from 297,840 to 433,405 tons (leading to an increase in the proportion collected by local authorities compared to industry from 39 per cent in 1941 to 50 per cent in 1942).¹¹¹ It is impossible to determine how much of this rise was due to stewards, but it should be noted that a number of local authorities gave them the credit.¹¹²

It is worth reflecting on a potential reason why this has been overlooked in the years since 1945. The archival collections used in this article unquestionably contain less material relating to wartime recycling than was expected given the scale of public involvement. Those few testimonies that were collected by Norman Longmate, Peter Liddle, and the BBC – as well as the interviews undertaken by the author – suggest that memories have been compressed with time. The former steward from Hull who wrote to Longmate in 1967 and 1968 is an excellent case in point. Her letters initially focused on the experience of bombing, and it was only after she was pushed to expand on a brief aside about recycling that she described this part of her war. She did so by writing a five-page letter, proudly taping her badge to the first sheet of paper.¹¹³ Since the 1960s, historians have become increasingly interested in modes of memory and their impact on our understandings of the past. If memory is treated as something produced by both

experience and later understanding, examples like this suggest that wartime recycling may have been overlooked because its quotidian nature runs counter to accepted narratives about the Second World War.¹¹⁴

However, this article has suggested that the mundane nature of wartime recycling is precisely what makes it significant. Arguably more than any other activity on the home front, the separation of household waste transposed the war effort into a domestic setting. The vast majority of British civilians participated and all who did were told to regard their effort as a direct contribution towards victory. This reveals the continued significance of the ‘people’s war’ as a frame of reference. As a series of official appeals for participation in response to the material conditions of total war, wartime recycling – and the salvage stewards scheme in particular – was a classic example of the ‘people’s war’ imposed from above. It illustrates the way that publicity was used to draw links between everyday actions and military fortunes, while showing the extent to which the state depended on voluntary effort. Nevertheless, the true significance of this example lies in the way it expounds the inherent complexity of the idea of a ‘people’s war’. The salvage stewards scheme was led from the bottom-up, shifted the balance of power between private citizens and local authorities, and highlighted differences based on age, socio-economic status, gender, and geographical location. Official appeals may have invoked the ‘people’s war’, but the way they were received was of most importance.

¹ It was estimated that 128,000 people had enrolled as ‘street stewards’ by December 1942 and 31,000 as ‘staff stewards’ by September 1943. See London, National Archives (NA), INF 2/2, Ministry of Information, *Home Front Handbook*, Dec 1942, p. 39 and ‘Staff Salvage Stewards’, *Public Cleansing and Salvage: The Monthly Journal of the Institute of Public*

Cleansing, 34:397, Sept 1943, p. 54. The WVS issued 192,523 badges to ‘Cogs’, but some areas did not operate a badge scheme, while others reserved badges for only the most enthusiastic participants. See Charles Graves, *Women in Green: The Story of the W.V.S.* (London, 1948), p. 204.

² Jose Harris, ‘Great Britain: The People’s War?’, in D. Reynolds et al (eds), *Allies at War: The Soviet, American, and British Experience, 1939-1945* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 233-59 (p. 233).

³ Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (London, 2004), p. 8.

⁴ Sonya O. Rose, *Which People’s War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2003), p. 290.

⁵ Timothy Cooper, ‘Challenging the “Refuse Revolution”: War, Waste and the Rediscovery of Recycling, 1900-1950’, *Historical Research*, 81:214 (2008), 710-31 (p. 718) and Peter Thorsheim, *Waste into Weapons: Recycling in Britain during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 8.

⁶ Henry Irving, ‘Paper Salvage in Britain during the Second World War’, *Historical Research*, 89:244 (2016), 373-393 and Mark Riley, ‘From Salvage to Recycling: New Agendas or Same Old Rubbish?’, *Area*, 40:1 (2008). 79-89.

⁷ Norman Longmate collected written testimony from just over 1,000 individuals during the research of *How We Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life during the Second World War* (London, 1971). This collection was transferred to the Mass Observation Archive in 2017.

⁸ Peter Liddle established the Second World War Experience Centre in 1998 as a counterpart to a collection of First World War testimony he had collected during the 1970s. The SWWEC holds written testimony from approximately 6,000 individuals and an oral archive of just under 5,000 recordings.

⁹ The BBC WW2 People’s War archive collected 47,000 written testimonies and 15,000 images between June 2003 and January 2006.

¹⁰ Calder, *The People’s War*, p. 17 and Harris, ‘The People’s War?’, p. 238.

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- ¹¹ NA, CAB 67/4/20, Reith, 'Principles and Objectives of British Wartime Propaganda', 26 January 1940, p. 1.
- ¹² *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), vol. 364, 20 August 1940, c. 1160.
- ¹³ *The Times*, 25 January 1940, p. 8. In March 1940, quota controls limited firms to using just 60 per cent of the amount of paper they had used in 1938-39. This was progressively tightened to 37.5 per cent by the end of 1941.
- ¹⁴ NA, CAB 68/6/34, Morrison, 'Supply and Production', 23 May 1940, p.10.
- ¹⁵ Thorsheim, *Waste into Weapons*, p. 35.
- ¹⁶ NA, HLG 51/556, Ministry of Supply, 'Salvage Circular No. 1: Memorandum for the Consideration of Local Authorities', [30] November 1939.
- ¹⁷ NA, AVIA 22/134, 'Important Decisions taken by the Ministry of Supply', 28 June 1940 and 1 February 1941.
- ¹⁸ NA, HLG 51/556, Interdepartmental Meeting, 5 October 1939.
- ¹⁹ *The Times*, 3 February 1940, pp. 3 and 7.
- ²⁰ NA, INF 13/149, Ministry of Supply, 'Waste Collection is Now Compulsory', n.d. [July 1940].
- ²¹ Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, 'Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War', *Women's History Review*, 9:2 (2000), 231-55 (p. 232).
- ²² *Daily Mirror*, 29 July 1940, pp. 6-7.
- ²³ NA, INF 3/219, Yates-Wilson, 'Up housewives and at 'em!', n.d. [July 1940] and *The Times*, 1 August 1940, p. 2 and 13 August 1940, p. 7.
- ²⁴ British Library Sound Archive, Megan Lloyd George, 'Salvage of Household Materials', 26 June 1940.
- ²⁵ This process has been well explored with regard to women's war work and women's contributions to civil defence, see Harold L. Smith, 'The Womanpower Problem in Britain during the Second World War', *The Historical Journal*, 27:4 (1984), 925-45; Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* (Manchester, 1998); Summerfield and

Peniston-Bird, 'Women in the Firing Line', 231-55; and Lucy Noakes, "'Serve to Save": Gender, Citizenship and Civil Defence in Britain, 1937-41', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47:4, 734-53.

²⁶ NA, T 214/188, Gregory to Crombie, 8 August 1940.

²⁷ Women's Royal Voluntary Service Archives and Heritage Collection (WRVSA&HC), WRVS/HQ/PUB/SAL-41, 'What a Cog Must Do', September 1941. Children's wartime work is explored in more detail in Berry Mayall and Virginia Morrow, *You Can Help Your Country: English children's work during the Second World War* (London, 2011).

²⁸ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/PUB/SAL-41, Untitled Press Release, n.d. [September 1941].

²⁹ *Daily Express*, 30 September 1941, p. 3.

³⁰ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/PUB/SAL-41, WVS, 'Salvage', n.d. [c. 1941/42], p. 2.

³¹ *The Times*, 10 February 1942, p. 2. The appeal was made by G.B. Hutchings (the Director of Salvage and Recovery), but was likely designed for Lord Beaverbrook who had been moved out of the Ministry of Supply just five days earlier.

³² *Daily Mirror*, 22 April 1942, p. 4 and WRVS&HC, WRVS/HQ/CR/SAL1/1, Ministry of Supply, 'Salvage Circular No. 70', 6 Feb 1942.

³³ NA, AVIA 22/3088, Ministry of Supply, 'The Salvage Steward's Guide: How You Can Help', n.d. [1942].

³⁴ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1941-CB/BGM, City of Birmingham, 'The Salvage Steward's Guide: How You Can Help', n.d. [1942].

³⁵ NA, AVIA 22/3088, 'The Salvage Steward's Guide: How You Can Help', n.d. [1942].

³⁶ *Hull Daily Mail*, 31 March 1942, p. 4.

³⁷ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/CR/SAL12, unattributed, 'Suggested Salvage Stewards Organisation', n.d. [c. 1943] p. 3.

³⁸ Calder, *The People's War*, p. 18.

³⁹ See also Geoffrey Field, *Blood, Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-45* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 377-8 and Daniel Travers and Paul Ward, 'Narrating Britain's War',

in M. Braganca and P. Tame (eds), *The Long Aftermath: Cultural Legacies of Europe at War, 1936-2016* (Oxford, 2017), 77-95 (p. 78).

- ⁴⁰ Jessica Hammett, 'The Invisible Chain by Which All are Bound to Each Other': Civil Defence Magazines and the Development of Community During the Second World War', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, advance access (2017), 1-17.
- ⁴¹ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/MM/SAL-23, 'Lady MPs Advisory Committee', 17 June 1940 and NA, AVIA 22/134, 'Important Decisions', 21 June 1940.
- ⁴² James Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership and the Second World War* (Oxford, 2002) and 'Voluntarism in the Welfare/Warfare State. Women's Voluntary Services in the 1940s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 9:2 (1998), pp. 274-305.
- ⁴³ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/MM/SAL-30, WVS, 'Salvage Memorandum', 10 June 1940.
- ⁴⁴ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/CR/SAL1/1, 'Victory Salvage Canvass', n.d. [2 August 1940].
- ⁴⁵ Quoted in Thorsheim, *Waste into Weapons*, p. 64.
- ⁴⁶ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/MM/SAL-20, Field, 'Report to Women Members of Parliament Committee', 6 November 1940.
- ⁴⁷ NA, INF 1/340, Bloxham to Rhodes, 19 December 1940. Such was the embarrassment that there would be no equivalent national campaign until October 1941, see Irving, 'Paper Salvage in Britain', pp. 384-7.
- ⁴⁸ There are examples of this happening later in the war, see footnote 103.
- ⁴⁹ Birmingham, Library of Birmingham (LB), BCC/1/BP/1/1/15, Report to Salvage and Stables Committee, 18 December 1940, p. 6.
- ⁵⁰ LB, BCC/1/BP/1/1/15, Salvage Sub Committee, Report to Salvage and Stables Committee, 17 July 1940, p. 3.
- ⁵¹ LB, BCC/1/BP/1/1/15, Minutes of the Salvage Subcommittee, 19 February 1941.
- ⁵² LB, BCC/1/BP/1/1/15, Report to Salvage and Stables Committee, 23 April 1941, p. 5.
- ⁵³ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1941-CB/BGM, 'Salvage Schemes Operating in Birmingham and Dudley', n.d. [September 1941].
- ⁵⁴ LB, BCC 1/BP/7/1/12, Wiltshire, 'Public Appeal', April 1941.

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- ⁵⁵ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1943-CB/BGM, Bristol, 'Report on Salvage, January-March 1943', n.d. [April 1943] and *Birmingham Post*, 8 May 1945.
- ⁵⁶ Sussex, The Keep, C/C/55/123, Ministry of Supply, 'Salvage Circular No. 47', 27 February 1941.
- ⁵⁷ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1941-CB/BGM, 'Salvage Schemes Operating in Birmingham and Dudley', n.d. [September 1941].
- ⁵⁸ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/CR/SAL1/1, WVS, 'The Salvage Stewards Scheme', 17 February 1942. Similar appeals were made through other organisations, see Women's Library, Women's Institute, 5/F, Walker to Farrer, 23 January 1942.
- ⁵⁹ Stratford, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT), BRR 55/14/31/3, Ministry of Supply, 'Salvage Circular No. 58' and 'Salvage Form No. 58a', 3 July 1941.
- ⁶⁰ *Liverpool Daily Post*, 27 February 1941 and *Evening Express*, 28 February 1941.
- ⁶¹ *Liverpool Daily Post*, 29 August 1941.
- ⁶² Liverpool City Archives (LCA), 352 ENG/2/7906-7, Salvage Exhibition, Radiant House, 1941.
- ⁶³ *Liverpool Daily Post*, 6 November 1941.
- ⁶⁴ Leeds, Leeds Local Studies (LLS), City of Leeds, 'Official Opening of the New Refuse Disposal Plant,' 29 September 1941.
- ⁶⁵ *Yorkshire Post*, 7 October 1941, p. 6.
- ⁶⁶ *Yorkshire Post*, 24 October 1941, p. 6, and 5 November 1941, p. 5.
- ⁶⁷ WRVS&HC, WRVS/HQ/CR/SAL1/1, Ministry of Supply, 'Salvage Circular No. 70', 6 February 1942 and 'Wanted Salvage Stewards', *Public Cleansing: The Monthly Journal of the Institute of Public Cleansing*, 32:379, March 1942, pp. 181.
- ⁶⁸ J.H. Ward, 'Salvage Stewards and Salvage', *Public Cleansing*, 33:388, December 1942, pp. 134-38. For example, SBT, BRR/55/14/31/7, Ray to Salvage Stewards, 18 May 1942 and 18 June 1942.

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- ⁶⁹ SBT, BRR/55/14/31/7 Smart to Barnett, 11 December 1943 and Second World War Experience Centre (SWWEC), Home Front/Clarke, 'Annual Report of the Thatcham Committee of the Women's Voluntary Services', 1943.
- ⁷⁰ LCA, News Cuttings, 'Variety Concert Programme', 5 May 1945.
- ⁷¹ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/ R6/1943-HAMP/AND RD.
- ⁷² WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/R7/1943-1945DEVN/KGB RD.
- ⁷³ SWWEC, Home Front/Clarke, 'Report on the Year's Work of the WVS in Thatcham Parish of the Newbury District', 1941.
- ⁷⁴ *Yorkshire Post*, 5 Nov 1941, p. 5.
- ⁷⁵ BBC People's War Archive (BBC PWA), Tony Greenfield, 'Longstone Local History Group', 19 December 2005 and John Newcomb, 'My Childhood Memories of WWII', 14 October 2005.
- ⁷⁶ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/MM/SAL, Unattributed account, 30 January 1975.
- ⁷⁷ NA, RG 23/9, Wartime Social Survey, 'Salvage', March 1942.
- ⁷⁸ Sussex, Mass Observation Archive (MOA), Topic Collections, 1/2/43/3/C, 'Paper Salvage', 20 March 1942.
- ⁷⁹ See footnote 6.
- ⁸⁰ Sheffield, Sheffield City Archive (SCA), SA/CA/529/734, Ministry of Supply, 'Salvage Circular No. 75', 25 March 1942 and E. McLauchlan, 'Salvage and Other Civil Defence Matters at Ipswich', *Proceedings of the Institution of Municipal and County Engineers*, 68:12, May 1942, 368-73 (p. 369).
- ⁸¹ SBT, BRR/55/14/31/3/4, Smart to Ray, 7 March 1941.
- ⁸² 'Editorial', *Public Cleansing: The Monthly Journal of the Institute of Public Cleansing*, 32:380, April 1942, pp. 208-10.
- ⁸³ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/R5/1942-CB/BHT, 'Monthly Report on WVS Activities in Brighton', April 1942.
- ⁸⁴ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/R12/1942-LON/SDH-MB, 'Report for September 1942, 3 October 1942.

⁸⁵ WRVSA&H, WRVS WVS/HQ/CR/SAL12, 'Suggested Salvage Stewards Organisation', n.d. [1943].

⁸⁶ Hull, Hull History Centre (HHC), C TCSV/1/1, Minutes of the Cleansing and Salvage Committee, 22 April 1942.

⁸⁷ HHC, C TCSV/1/1, Minutes of the Cleansing and Sanitary Committee, 23 September 1942 and Interview with AH, Hull, March 2018 and WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/R5/1943-CB/BHT, 'Monthly Narrative report', September 1943, f. 5.

⁸⁸ MOA, Topic Collection, 1/2/43/3/B, C.F., 'Salvage – Kilburn', 1 November 1941.

⁸⁹ Interview with ND, Hertfordshire, December 2017.

⁹⁰ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/PUB, WVS, *Ten Year's Work for the Nation, 1938-1948* (London: WVS, 1948), p. 39 and WVS, *The Bulletin*, 40, February 1943, p. 2. See Hinton, 'Women's Voluntary Services in the 1940s', p. 285.

⁹¹ Hilda and John Jorden held a number of joint events for others involved in the scheme. See, WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/CR/SAL12, R. Holt-Wilson, 'Personal Report. Region 4, May 1944', c. 1 Jun 1944.

⁹² *Yorkshire Post*, 16 December 1942, p. 6.

⁹³ These figures need to be treated with caution as the sample was overwhelmingly female and the WVS collected no data about the demographic make-up of the households concerned.

⁹⁴ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/CR/SAL12, 'Suggested Salvage Stewards Organisation', n.d. [1943].

⁹⁵ MOA, 55/5/2, H51 to Longmate, 7 November 1968.

⁹⁶ SBT, BRR/55/14/31/7, 'List of Salvage Stewards', n.d. [c.1942].

⁹⁷ NA, RG 23/19, 'Public Attitudes Towards Government Instructions', May 1942.

⁹⁸ Interview with TR, Birmingham, November 2017.

⁹⁹ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1945-CB/BGM, 'Monthly Narrative Report', June 1945.

¹⁰⁰ HHC, C TCSV/1/2, Minutes of Special Committee, Salvage (Special) Committee, 19 January 1944.

¹⁰¹ Interview with PC, Hull, March 2018.

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- ¹⁰² MOA, 55/4/1, F 32 to Longmate, n.d. [c. 1967].
- ¹⁰³ SWWEC, Home Front/Clarke, 'Annual Report on the Thatcham Committee of the Women's Voluntary Services', 1942 and 1943.
- ¹⁰⁴ H. Campbell Golding, 'Collection and Disposal of House Refuse and Salvage in the Urban District of East Grinstead', *Proceedings of the Institution of Municipal and County Engineers*, 70:8, February 1944, 285-9 (p. 288).
- ¹⁰⁵ NA, INF 1/292, Home Intelligence, Weekly Reports, 1 April-1 October 1942.
- ¹⁰⁶ Golding, 'Collection and Disposal of House Refuse', p. 289.
- ¹⁰⁷ J.H. Ward, 'Salvage Stewards and Salvage', *Public Cleansing: The Monthly Journal of the Institute of Public Cleansing*, 33:388, December 1942, pp. 134-38.
- ¹⁰⁸ WRVSA&HC, WRVS/HQ/CR/SAL12, R. Holt-Wilson, 'Confidential Report. Region 4.', 4 January 1945.
- ¹⁰⁹ The Keep, C/C/55/123, Ministry of Supply, 'Salvage Circular No. 81', 25 June 1942.
- ¹¹⁰ J.H. Ward, 'Salvage Stewards and Salvage', *Public Cleansing: The Monthly Journal of the Institute of Public Cleansing*, 33:388, December 1942, pp. 134-38 (p. 134).
- ¹¹¹ *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), vol. 414, 15 October 1945, cc. 712-3W.
- ¹¹² 'The Value of Salvage Stewards', *Public Cleansing and Salvage*, 34:399 November 1943, p. 124.
- ¹¹³ MOA, 55/5/2, H51 to Longmate, 17 November 1967, H51 to Longmate, n.d. [December 1967], Longmate to H51, 4 November 1968 and H51 to Longmate, 7 November 1968.
- ¹¹⁴ For different approaches to memory of the Second World War see, Lucy Noakes and Julitte Pattinson, "'Keep Calm and Carry On': The Cultural Memory of the Second World War in Britain", in L. Noakes and J. Pattinson (eds), *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War* (London, 2014), pp. 1-24.